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news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

14 April 1989

Washington--Rep Kika de la Garza has asked the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for help on the rapidly expanding drought situation throughout South Texas.

Rep de la Garza said "Farmland and rangeland in South Texas remains damaged by a drought that began in full force during 1988 and continued into 1989 without so much as a pause, and I am certain the Secretary of Agriculture shares our concern about what is happening in South Texas."

Certain drought programs of the USDA have been authorized by Congress and include the **Emergency Feed Program (EFP)**, the **Emergency Feed Assistance Program (EFAP)**, the **Prickly Pear Cactus Burning Program**, and the **hay and grazing** permission on farm set-aside acres.

Congressman de la Garza said "I have written the Secretary seeking his help on the many requests for emergency drought assistance that have been made by numerous South Texas counties."

Following Department procedures, the County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) Committee sends its emergency request to the state ASCS executive office in College Station where it is processed and then sent to USDA in Washington for final approval.

The following South Texas counties have sent emergency requests to the state ASCS office: **Atascosa, Bee, Brooks, Duval, Frio, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Karnes, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, Starr, Willacy and Zapata.** Rep de la Garza said "The state ASCS has sent USDA in Washington the emergency requests made by Jim Hogg, Brooks and Jim Wells Counties and we are hopeful the state ASCS will quickly process the other requests and move them forward in the approval chain as rapidly as possible."

The USDA advised the Congressman that it will soon release technical criteria to be used by the state ASCS in analyzing the county requests for adjusted haying and grazing periods.

De la Garza mentioned "Our hope that USDA will adjust this traditional haying and grazing period to allow our producers the chance to keep their livestock healthy during the drought period when they most need the feed." On the approval of the USDA, producers in a county can graze livestock and utilize set-aside pastureland during the summer months--normally a time when such **hay and grazing** is prohibited.

"We will work in a spirit of cooperation with the USDA for the benefit of all Texas producers who are still facing a rough time with dry and blowing topsoil and lack of livestock feed."

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